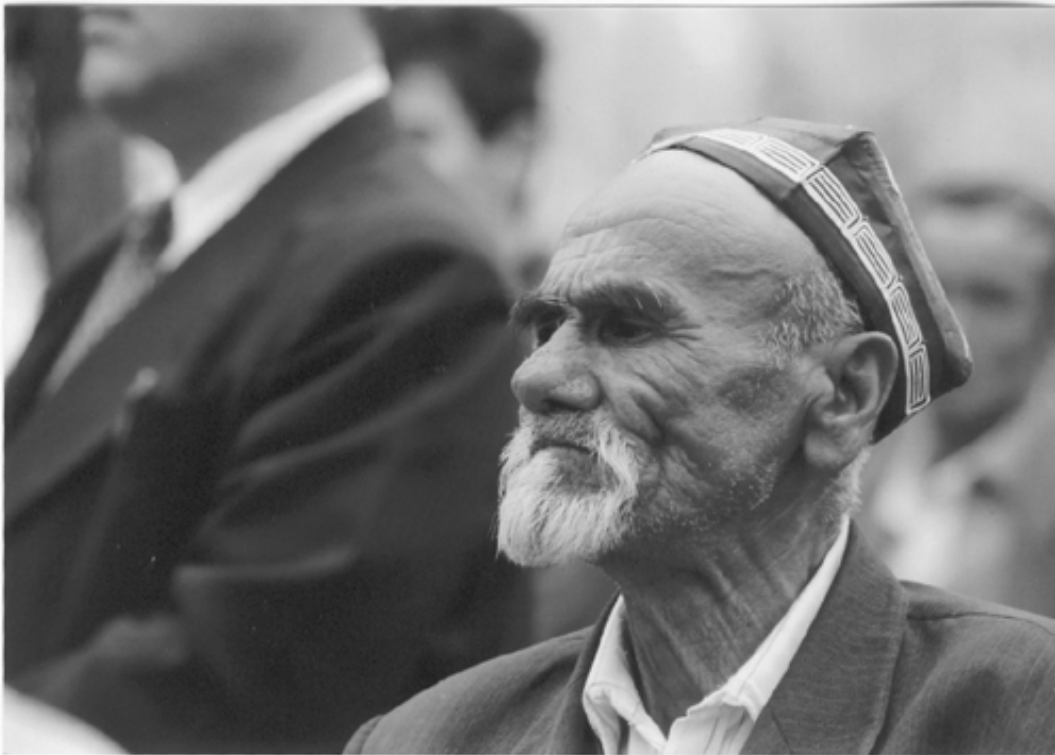


QUARTERLY REPORT
(October 2001-December 2001)
PEACEFUL COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE
USAID's Conflict Mitigation Initiative in the Ferghana Valley
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USAID's Peaceful Communities Initiative in the Ferghana Valley

The main focus of the USAID's Peaceful Communities Initiatives 2nd Quarter was for the PCI Team to conduct need assessments in potential communities, select the first round of communities, and begin work with the community initiative groups.¹ This report provides an overview of the PCI process and the results to date.

The Peaceful Communities Initiative Process

USAID's Peaceful Communities Initiative (PCI) is a grassroots community development approach for conflict prevention in multi-ethnic communities in the Ferghana Valley. PCI is being implemented by Mercy Corps, ICA/EHIO (Tajikistan), the Kokand Business Women's Association (Uzbekistan), Foundation for Tolerance International (Kyrgyzstan), Fido (Uzbekistan), and Mehr (Sohk, Uzbekistan). PCI's main office is located in Andijan, with satellite offices located in Batken, Kokand, Osh, Khojand, Sohk, and Isfana.

The Five Teams

The PCI Team is comprised of five field teams of three or four members. These field teams work in communities spread across the three countries that share the Ferghana Valley. The teams were formed to include members from different organizations, different nations, mixed gender, and a combination of technical and community experience. The ethnic and national mix that results is critical for PCI's effort to maintain an unbiased approach understanding and addressing community problems.²

The PCI Process to Date

The work during this quarter was based on a three-month action plan developed at the PCI Team Kick-off Meeting held in Osh in December 2001. PCI will work in 30-40 communities over the next 3 years, chosen on the basis of criteria also established at the initial meeting. The primary criteria for sites are that they have a multi-ethnic population, face resource scarcity or poor resource management, and exhibit a potential for, or history of, conflict. Because numerous other organizations (eg. INTRAC, World Bank, UNDP, Mercy Corps) have conducted assessments of villages during recent years, many of which did not lead to any improvements in the villages assessed, PCI did not want to raise expectations yet again in villages that we would then choose not to work in. Therefore, the initial needs assessment of 45 villages were completed with no more than 2 days in each community, with much of the data coming from previous assessments.

In mid-March 2002, the PCI Team met again and selected the initial 14 villages. After the March Workshop, the teams set out to conduct more in-depth community assessments in the targeted 16 villages.³ The goal is to take a comprehensive approach to community development by initially establishing a Community Initiative Group (CIG), comprised of

¹ All photographs are by Colin Spurway.

² Experience has shown that similar projects in the area have had problems with field teams favoring solutions that primarily supported their own ethnic group.

³ For a more detailed account of the March 2002 PCI Workshop please contact John Strickland for the Workshop Report.

individuals representing a wide variety of sectors in each community. Each CIG then develops a list of the most urgent problems faced by that community and an action plan to address those problems.

List of the first 16 PCI Communities

Village	Country	Team	Population
Ovchi	Tajikistan	Team 1	3900
International	Kyrgyzstan	Team 1	3000
Pahtabuston	Uzbekistan	Team 2	1900
Vorukh	Uzbekistan	Team 2	2400
Ravat	Tajikistan	Team 2	2500
Boz Aydr	Kyrgyzstan	Team 3	1500
Kar Tokoi	Kyrgyzstan	Team 3	900
Sharqabad	Uzbekistan	Team 3	2200
Sogment	Kyrgyzstan	Team 3	1600
Sharbak	Kyrgyzstan	Team 3	400
Hushjar	Uzbekistan	Team 3	5500
Mamanazarov	Kyrgyzstan	Team 4	10300
Rohat	Uzbekistan	Team 4	2500
Naiman	Uzbekistan	Team 4	2500
Jeke Miste	Kyrgyzstan	Team 4	2300
Karayontog	Uzbekistan	Team 5	1100
		Total Beneficiaries	44,500

One of the keys to the success of the project will be for each PCI member to look beyond their roles within their own country or NGO, and identify themselves as members of the PCI team addressing the complex problems of the Ferghana Valley as a whole. It is one of PCI's primary goals to build a strong network between the member NGOs that will function effectively long after the PCI project has finished. The long-term approach to the work will help team members work more closely with their pilot communities over the three years of the project to promote a bottom-up approach to community development.

Methods Used and Skills Learned

The Peaceful Communities Initiative makes as much use as possible of participatory techniques in its implementation, since this is the governing ethic of our community mobilization approach. Our field teams aim to help communities come to the best conclusion themselves, and not to impose their own vision.

In similar fashion, when the PCI team meets together, we utilize the skills of EHIO, our partner in Tajikistan. EHIO is a member of the Institute for Cultural Affairs (ICA), an organisation with over fifty years of experience in facilitation. All members of EHIO are trained facilitators, and their director is a qualified trainer. PCI has benefited greatly from their services as facilitators during our own meetings. We have used their involvement with open discussions when sharing experiences in the field or reviewing work, when making plans for the best way to approach the weeks of PRA, for reaching

consensus on the Codex that governs the relations within field teams, and between the organizations that make up the PCI partnership.⁴

When the whole team meets together, we spend much of the time learning new skills. In February when we met, we had sessions that deepened our knowledge of PRA techniques, and a representative from Save the Children UK came to give us a special session on including children in decision-making and in our PRA needs assessments. The latter has proven particularly useful to many of the teams, and has allowed us to include in our work a section of the communities that must be regarded as a priority in terms not just of mainstream development, but of conflict resolution.

The PCI Process Leading to Results

The significance of PCI's activities will not be limited to the physical improvements introduced into communities. A greater priority in our work is the changes of relationship and attitude that will evolve as communities are brought together through development projects, and as they feel increasingly empowered to improve their own situation over existing ethnic or national differences. Even though PCI is at an early stage in its community mobilization, the teams already have several success stories on how communities are beginning to solve their own problems simply by addressing their problems collectively.

The Process In Action: Team 4 an Example

PCI Team 4, which works in southeastern part of the Ferghana Valley, has established a Community Initiative Group in Naiman, Uzbekistan. Naiman is located directly on the Kyrgyzstan border, in fact, the border actually runs down the middle of one of the main streets. As the divide becomes steadily strengthened, access to land, work and even houses is becoming increasingly difficult. The village has a population of 2600 (95% Uzbek), and the main problems other than the border include poor access to quality drinking and irrigation water, no natural gas, and poor health.

After conducting an extensive PRA in March, Team 4 presented their finding to a larger group of about 100 community members. The larger community group chose 13 members to be on their community initiative group, including three women, a doctor, a teacher, young people as well as aksakals, and shirkat⁵ and mahalla⁶ representatives. Then Team 4 held a roundtable with the CIG, Hokimlik, Mahhalla, State Gas Company, and Kishlq Fugarolar⁷. In developing an action plan to address problems in the community, several solutions to these problems quickly surfaced. For example, the shirkat will establish a kindergarten during the growing season and the Hokimlik assured that the community would have a doctor at least two days a week in the Namian Medical Clinic. There was also discussion of cost sharing for larger projects. One of the

⁴ For a copy of the PCI Codex, contact John Strickland.

⁵ Shirkat are the organizational structures replacing the state and collective farms, though in most cases they operate much as they did during the Soviet period.

⁶ Mahalla is a traditional self-governing organization that is based at the community level.

⁷ Kishlq Fugarolar is a body that represents a group of mahallas.

significant steps of the meeting was that members of the CIG represented the needs of their community, not their individual needs.



PCI Team 4 Interviewee in Naiman Uzbekistan

Projects

In addition, many ideas for projects have started coming in. So far, the majority are focused on youth and access to clean drinking water. These proposals are currently being reviewed and implementation will begin in the next quarter (April-June). With the projects to date, as discussed below, it is clear that much of what is lacking is an avenue for discussion, through which people from all sectors of the villages can focus their energy. With many social structures failing it is clear that citizens lack an understanding of how to address their problems. However, once an avenue is opened, individuals often demonstrate a focused and creative energy.

USAID Nauruz Celebrations

Three PCI Teams participated in hosting Nauruz festivals in their pilot villages. Nauruz is the Islamic New Year holiday, and falls at the beginning of spring on the vernal equinox. It marks the transition from cold to warmth, from dark to light, and from evil to good. Nauruz is also a time for reconciliation with adversaries.

Avchi-Kalacha

The villages of Avchi and Kalacha in Tajikistan are located directly on the border with Kyrgyzstan. There are a number of points of contention between the Tajik, Kyrgyz and Uzbek neighbors here, but a Nawruz celebration was held in the town hall of Kalacha

with guests from the neighbouring villages, and the Peaceful Communities Initiative Team 1 as the guests of honor. The party included a tournament between two teams of boys and girls who competed in singing, dancing, the presentation of traditions, and various games.

Pahtaboston, Uzbekistan

PCI Team 2 worked with villagers to prepare for a Nauruz celebration in Pahtaboston, an ethnically Kyrgyz village near Kokand in Uzbekistan. Over 500 people, including villagers from Ravod and Vorukh, PCI pilot communities in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, attended the festival. The day's events included a musical celebration of the arrival of spring by school children, the traditional 'Kelin Salom', a lullaby competition, wrestling, traditional Kyrgyz, Tajik, and Uzbek dances, and a puppet and clown show for the children.



Villagers in Pahtaboston, Uzbekistan at Nauruz Festival organized by PCI

The event received unprecedented media coverage thanks to the excellent connections the PCI partner organisation, The Business Womens' Association of Kokand. It was filmed by crews from Mulokot (Kokand) and an independent television station in Tashkent, while programs featuring footage and interviews were shown on networks in Tashkent, throughout the Ferghana Valley, and in Osh and Khojund.

Boz-Adyr

One of the most fascinating areas covered by PCI is Sokh, an enclave of Uzbekistan, thirty-five kilometers long, with an almost entirely ethnic Tajik population, within the Batken oblast of Kyrgyzstan. PCI Field Team 3 work in villages on both sides of the borders in Sokh. They cost-shared with the local authorities in Boz-Adyr village to support a Nawruz celebration that brought together men, women and children from Kyrgyz and Tajik villages on both sides of the international border to play sports, perform traditions, sing and dance. The celebration was also attended by members of the local administrations from both Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan.

The Osh Condominium Sports' Facilities and Youth League Program

The Condominium Program is a collaboration between PCI, the Urban Institute/USAID, and Osh Konush, an Osh based NGO that is an umbrella organization for condominiums in Osh Oblast. The program was initiated to promote youth activities in the multi-ethnic newly established condominiums, former block apartments that have been re-established as condominiums to manage their common resources. There are currently few activities for youth in Osh, and this project has been developed to promote healthy lifestyles and build links between young people throughout the city. The project will share costs with the condominiums (up to six grants will be awarded) to construct sport and play areas and to establish a summer citywide basketball league for boys and girls.

Advertising for the program was aired on television and placed in newspapers. In addition, information about the program was posted at all Osh condominiums and a briefing was given to condominium representatives in mid-March. The final proposals are due on April 15, and construction will begin in early May. The key for the program's success will be a feeling of ownership in the condominiums to promote sustainability of the facilities and the large participation of youth in the leagues.

USAID Ferghana Valley Youth Basketball League

Since January 2002, three tournaments of the USAID Ferghana Valley Youth Basketball League were held in Andijan, Mailu Su, and Ferghana. The series of four tournaments was established to give boys' basketball teams (15-16 years of age) from Osh (Kyrgyzstan), Andijan (Uzbekistan), Mailu Su (Kyrgyzstan), and Ferghana (Uzbekistan) the opportunity to compete in an international youth basketball league. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, sport programs in Central Asia have lost a majority of their funding; thus, teams have limited funds for equipment and travel. The league's main goal is to build a bridge of friendship for youth in the Ferghana Valley. One of the main success stories, as the trainer from Osh Sergey Illyich expressed that "the league has given the trainers motivation to work harder with their teams, attendance at practices has increased, and life has simply become more entertaining." All four teams have a large ethnic mix of Uzbek, Tatar, Kyrgyz, Tajik, Turks, and Russians. The final tournament will be held in Osh on May 3-5. There is already discussion of expanding to league to include girls, different age groups, and more cities. In March, a container of almost 4000 pairs of Nike basketball shoes to the Ferghana Valley left Portland, Oregon.



Osh Basketball Team with Internews TV Crew. Internews produced a documentary film about the Osh Team.

Youth Camps

The first steps are being taken to put together a series of youth camps for this summer that will bring together young people from across the southern half of the Valley to build friendships that go beyond ethnic and national boundaries. The camps will feature games and exercises in debate and discussion, tolerance education, human and child rights, advocacy, conflict resolution roleplays and social theatre. To help our field staff run them, PCI will draw upon the existing experience of the OSCE, and the PCI partner NGO, FTI, as well as the resources and experience of the Open Society Foundation and the Civic Education Project that will supply young, western trained local academics to lead discussions.

Media Overview

During the quarter, PCI received extensive media coverage of USAID's Ferghana Valley Youth Basketball League and the Nuruz Festivals. In addition, the PCI project was featured in Salam Asia, a journal published by Foundation for Tolerance International in four languages (Tajik, Uzbek, Kyrgyz, and Russian) and distributed throughout the Ferghana Valley.

Lessons Learned

Lessons learned in the Quarter include:

Many of communities that we are working with are viewing the PCI project as a replacement for the failing of the local government. The teams have made an extensive effort to include local government in the community mobilization process.

Several proposals PCI has received are based on extending non-sustainable Soviet engineering projects, which suggests that many communities have still not come to terms with the changing economic conditions. For example, PCI received a proposal from Sohk to expand a water pumping station; the project is not financially viable because it is based on free electricity costs.

Traveling in the Ferghana Valley, though difficult, is possible. The Tajikistan-Uzbekistan borders are the most troublesome, and the PCI staff continues to try and find avenues to easy border crossings. Traveling has been made easier with letters from USAID, project ID Cards, and diplomatic/technical assistance plates for the PCI automobiles.

Coordination with other donors and USAID grantees has been extremely time consuming; however, once the channels are established it is clear coordination will benefit to PCI Communities.

Coordination

Approach

The overriding PCI approach to coordination is for communities to identify the problems themselves, and if necessary search for possible coordination opportunities with other international projects (a bottom-up approach).

Andijan office to be shared in the short-term with USAID

Because of the shortage in adequate office space, USAID and PCI will share office until August. This will be a great opportunity to develop strong links with PCI and the other USAID grantees and contractors working in the Ferghana Valley.

Missions to the Ferghana Valley

There were numerous high-level missions from USAID and other International Donor Agencies (including the World Bank and Canadian International Agency for International Development, and the Swiss Agency for Cooperation and Development). PCI had the opportunity to share the project objective and site visits with USAID Assistant Administrator Kent Hill, Deputy Assistant Administrator Gloria Steele, USAID CAR Deputy Director Michael Fritz, Kyrgyzstan Country Representative Tracy Atwood, and Tajikistan Country Representative Michael Harvey, and other high level representatives.

Examples of Coordination during the Quarter

Examples of coordination in this Quarter included:

- In the hiring of PCI staff, Counterpart was extremely helpful in identifying candidates.
- The condominium project in Osh with the Urban Institute is already under way.
- The early talks about on-farm water irrigation management I think are beginning to take shape with PA Consulting, World Bank, IWMI, and Asian Development Bank.
- Early discussions with Abt about their sports programs will hopefully lead to sports programs in all of our communities.
- Work with Internews on filming of the basketball document in Mailu Su.
- Internews and Eurasia possibly agreeing to work on a year long documentary in one of our villages.

Looking Ahead

In the next quarter we will begin to see the first community based projects including infrastructure, youth programs, and other Ferghana Valley projects.

Further Information

For more information about the project's approach, results, lesson learned, coordination, and any other issues, please feel free to contact.

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